

Blood Lead Testing and Follow-Up Information

Why does SC screen for lead levels in children?

Today, childhood lead poisoning is considered the most preventable environmental disease among young children, yet approximately half a million U.S. children have elevated blood-lead levels greater than or equal to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) action level of 5 micrograms per deciliter ($\geq 5\mu\text{g/dL}$).

[From National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week]

Children are the most at risk for lead poisoning but only if exposed to [potential sources](#) of lead. For this reason, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the need to test more lead-exposed children and fewer children without lead exposure. This is accomplished with targeted testing, which is based on an evaluation of risk at well baby visits, particularly at ages 12 months and 24 months.

How does South Carolina test for Lead?

The majority of young children are tested by their private health care provider (PCP) or county health department. By law, all blood lead testing results are reported to DHEC from doctor's offices and labs when a test is done in SC.

A finger stick (capillary) blood sample is usually done first. Children with capillary blood lead level (BLL) results greater than or equal to five micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood ($\geq 5\mu\text{g/dL}$) should receive follow-up services from their PCP or county health department.

If the initial BLL (finger stick) test is ($\mu\text{g/dL}$)*:	Perform follow-up(venous)test:
5-19 (Immediately re-test by venous blood sample)	Within 3 months
20-44 (Immediately re-test by venous blood sample)	Within 1 week to 1 month
45-59 (Immediately re-test by venous blood sample)	Within 48 hours

* micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood

What is done when lead levels are 5 $\mu\text{g/dL}$ or higher in children?

A follow-up after a high BLL result can involve the collection of another blood sample from a vein to confirm the result (see chart above). Education, counseling, and referral may be offered by either the PCP and/or DHEC. When results are $\geq 20 \mu\text{g/dL}$, additional follow-up, such as an environmental assessment, may be required.

An environmental assessment is an investigation of the child's home and/or areas in which the child routinely spends significant amounts of time. It will

be completed (usually within 3 weeks of DHEC's notice) when a child has **EITHER** a confirmed (venous) BLL result ≥ 20 $\mu\text{g/dL}$ **OR** **persistent** lead poisoning (defined as two venous BLL results between 15 and 19 $\mu\text{g/dL}$ at least three months apart).

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact SC DHEC's Division of Children's Health at 803-898-1580.